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AUTHOR Dempsey, Arthur D.
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the attitudes of teachers from three different cultural backgrounds (Anglo-American, American Black, and Hispanic) concerning elementary school boys and girls. An instrument consisting of 39, seven-step, bipolar semantic differential scales, based on terms descriptive of elementary school boys and girls, was developed and administered to 154 preservice and inservice teachers representing the three ethnic groups. Subjects were asked to mark electrographic score sheets in order to facilitate compilation and analysis of data. A Chi-square analysis was applied for each of the 32 scales to determine if statistically significant differences existed between Anglo-Americans and Black Americans as well as between Hispanic and Black Americans. Results, considered statistically significant at either the .10 or the .05 level, indicated that Anglo-Americans' and Black Americans' ratings of elementary school boys and girls were different on 20 scales. Regarding boys, the ratings of Black Americans were different from those of Hispanics on 11 scales. No significant differences were found between the ratings of Black Americans and Hispanics with respect to girls. (MP)

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WHAT IS AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILD? ANGLO, BLACK AND HISPANIC TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS

Arthur D. Dempsey, Ed.D.
Florida International University

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WHAT IS AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILD?
ANGLO, BLACK AND HISPANIC TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS

There has been much discussion concerning the impact of schools upon children's perceptions of sex roles. This is especially true when one considers the wide variety of materials relating to the influence of reading materials which often showed boys in active roles and girls as passive observers. However, there are more subtle influences on sex role definition occurring in the classroom. These are the attitudes and expectations of teachers in teaching directly or indirectly those attributes which define acceptable sex roles.

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the attitudes of teachers from three different cultural backgrounds, Anglo-American, American Black, and Hispanic concerning elementary school boys and girls.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Often we are told that males in the Anglo-American culture are considered hostile and aggressive in school situations while females are considered passive and conforming.

> "Little boys must be strong and active,
> little girls must be cute and cuddly...
> By school age, boys are more agressive
> where girls are more verbal...Boys are
> learning how to be strong while girls
> are learning to be caring. (Forisha, 340)

Black American sex role development appears to be influenced by the "absent male" condition of many families. Further there is an apparent dominance by Black females which leads to an almost matriarchal society.

Finally, in..."the Latin American cultures the essence of the male is emotional, earthy and polite (courteous), and of the female is controlled, spiritual and assertive." (Quinones, 31).

There have been a number of studies which have examined sexual stereotyping in the school classroom. Generally, research demonstrates differential treatment of boys and girls by teachers and one study concludes "...different patterns of teacher-child interaction for boys and girls are clearly present and may well result in further sex differences and social development" (Serbin, 803).

Payne (1981) and Silvern (1978) both found that teachers respond differently to boys and girls. Gutternburg and Bray concluded, "it is clear that teachers play a major role in inculcating and supporting children's sex role values and standards." (in Seargent, 408).

Finally, the investigator has demonstrated that teachers do stereotype boys and girls through different categorizations (Dempsey, 1973) and that there are culturally biased differences in perception of boys and girls between Anglo-American teachers and Cubar-American teachers. (Dempsey, 1982)

Procedure

The investigator developed a semantic differential scale based on terms descriptive of elementary school boys and girls elicited from pre-service and in-service teachers (Dempsey, 1973). Thirty-nine seven step, bi-polar scales were developed utilizing Roget's Thesaurus and Websters New Dictionary of Synonyms to find opposite or nearly opposite terms. The subjects were given the semantic differential scale and asked to mark electrographic score sheets in order that compilation and analysis of the data might be facilitated.

No attempt was made to determine the age, sex, grade level preference, educational background or other possibly relevant factors in drawing conclusions in this study. A Chi Square score was found for each of the thirty-nine scales to determine if statistically significant differences existed between Anglo-Americans and Black Americans as well as Hispanics and Black Americans.

Subjects

One hundred and fifty-four pre-service and in-service teachers were given the instrument. Because of omissions and/or failure to mark the response sheets correctly, the actual numbers of responses varies from item to item. Even in those cases, the investigator felt that the samples were still large enough to draw conclusions.

Results

The results were considered statistically significant if they reached either the .10 or the .05 level of significance.

Anglo-Americans compared with Black Americans

Differences occurred between Anglo-Americans and Black-Americans as between the .10 and .05 level on four scales when considering elementary school boys. These scales were:

Shy	Obtrusive
Stable	Temperamental
Brave	Cowardly
Fair	Unfair

Differences occurred between Anglo-Americans and American Blacks at the .05 level or below on sixteen scales when considering elementary school boys. These scales were:

Morose	Giggly
Bossy	Dependent
Prissy	Virile
Inquisitive	Incurious
Mischievious	Malicious
Lovable	Hateful
Selfish	Sharing
Tattletale	Concealing
Fussy	Careless
Emotional	Rational
Sweet	Bad
Active	Passive
Eager	Listless
Loud	Quiet
Loyal	Disloyal
Follower	Leader

Because of the relatively small samples, trends are difficult to establish. However it would appear the Anglo-Americans tended to find boys more obtrusive, stable, brave, unfair, giggly, dependent, prissy, incurious. American Blacks tended to find boys more mischievous, lovable, selfish, concealing, rational sweet, active, eager, loud, disloyal and leaders.

Differences occurred between Anglo-Americans and Black Americans between the .10 and .05 level on five scales when considering elementary school girls. These scales were:

Mischievous	Malicious
Lovable	Hateful
Creative	Dull
Stable	Temperamental
Hating	Loving

Differences occurred between Anglo Americans and American Blacks at the .05 level or below on fifteen scales when considering elementary school girls. These scales were:

Bossy	Dependent
Prissy	Virile
Shy	Obtrusive
Protective	Open
Sneaky	Straightforward
Tattletale	Concealing
Fussy	Careless
Aggressive	Timid
Independent	Dependent
Athletic	Inactive
Loud	Quiet
Aimless	Purposeful
Brave	Cowardly
Loyal	Disloyal
Follower	Leader

Anglo-Americans tended to find girls more malicious, lovable, creative, temperamental, hating, bossy, virile, obtrusive, protective and straighforward. American Blacks tended to find girls to be more concealing, fussy, agressive, independent, inactive, quiet, aimless, brave, loyal and leaders.

Black Americans Compared With Hispanics

Differences occurred between Black Americans and Hispanics between the .10 level and the .05 level on four scales when considering elementary school boys. These scales were:

Flighty	Steady
Creative	Dull
Tattletale	Concealing
Sweet	Bad

Differences occurred between Black Americans and Hispanics at the .05 level or below on eight scales when considering elementary school boys. These scales were:

Bossy	Virile
Fussy	Careless
Emotional	Rational
Exclusive	Inclusive
Active	Passive
Eager	Listless
Follower	Leader

American Blacks tended to find boys more flighty, creative, concealing, sweet, bossy and prissy. Hispanics tended to find boys more careless, rational, exclusive, passive, listless and leaders.

No differences occurred between Black Americans and Hispanics between the .10 and .05 levels of significance when considering elementary school girls.

Differences occurred between Black-Americans and Hispanics at the .05 level or below on two scales when considering elementary school girls. These scales were:

Fussy	Careless
Aggressive	Timid

American Blacks tended to find girls more fussy and aggressive.

Conclusions

Perhaps the most significant finding of these results was the essential lack of differences between American Blacks and Hispanics when considering elementary school girls. It is clear that American Blacks and Hispanics share common attitudes concerning elementary school girls. However, determining precisely what cultural factors have led to these similarities requires another study.

In conclusion, the results of the research demonstrate that there are definitely differences in the perceptions of elementary school boys and girls by teachers from different cultural background. This is not necessarily bad because some of the traits of males and females considered negative by one group were considered positive by another. We can only hope that teachers from different cultural backgrounds would become well aware of the possible conflicts which might arise as a result of the differences in perceptions of masculine and feminine roles between themselves and their students. Teachers must emphasize the positive aspects of masculinity and feminity for children no matter what their backgrounds.

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